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## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal



# *The* EVOLUTION *of a* GIRL'S IDEAL

A little record of  
the ripening of the  
affections to the  
time of Love's com-  
ing.

by Clara E. Laughlin

*"The way of life is wonderful,  
It is by abandonment."*

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# The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

"The way of life is wonderful; it is by abandonment."

SOME TIME, somewhere, long ago, that sentence caught my uncomprehending eye and fastened its literal outlines, but not its spiritual significance, on my recollection. At a later day, when I could not remember when or where I had read it, or from whose pen it came or by what context it was surrounded, it flashed into the forefront of my consciousness, with a haunt-

*A  
striking  
sentence*

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*We live  
to learn*

ing power and illuminating suggestiveness. "The way of life is wonderful; it is by abandonment." I began to wish for commentaries on my text, to think that if we could know at what point and by what process any soul came to this realization, we should know the most profoundly interesting thing that soul could tell us.

We begin by believing that the way of life is by acquisition, by what the world reckons progress. We live to learn that it is by abandonment, by the ability to do without rather than by the capability to gain,

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by the growing away from ideals rather than by fulfilment of them, and this not necessarily by a ruthless decree, but most often by a specially benignant one.

*How to  
give up*

I wish biography, even autobiography, were more explicit on this point. And so wishing, so thinking, I began to put down the poor, bare, utterly commonplace little outlines I knew "best of all," as Mrs. Burnett says; and looking backward as best I could, my recollection flew, straight as a magnetic needle to the north, to the time when I

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*First  
forebod-  
ings*

used, as a little girl, to look forward with a chill agony of foreboding to the inevitable days when I should be "too big" to play with dolls. I felt sure that when such a time came to me I should want to die; life would hold no further incentives to go on living. I really suffered in this anticipation, imagining that some day, in the full flush of my passionate love for my dolls, someone would come to me and make me put my treasures away from me forever, and my heart would surely break in one great ache of

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ac

agony. But I can't even remember how or when I stopped playing with dolls. My interest in them, my passion for them, their power to absorb and satisfy me, faded so gradually, so gently, into other interests, other passions, that there was no wrench in the transition; it was evolution, and as quiet as the growth of grass, the unfolding of buds, as the creeping by of time.

*Touching  
my dolls*

I never "gave up" my dolls; they keep their place in "the doll of me" that belongs to us; it is part of me

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*"Inch by  
inch"*

yet, for we do not grow away from our beginnings, nor from any of our successive stages of growth; we simply keep adding, inch by inch, to our mental and spiritual as well as to our physical stature, but we never grow away from any part of it—we can only "add on." I "added on" to my doll days the inevitable next stage of schoolgirl friendships; only, instead of adding as bricks are added to bricks, separate entity to separate entity, with necessity of mortar to hold them together, I added, by the blessing of Providence, I sup-

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pose, as color is added to color in the marvellous blend of the rainbow, or as theme is added to theme in the softest, smoothest harmony.

*The blend  
of the  
rainbow*

It used to seem to me that if there ever came a time when I could not see daily, or thrice-daily, those school-chums who so thoroughly sup-planted dolls in my affections, that life would be stark, intolerable. But I never see them now, of course; I can hardly even remember their names. Nor do I remember that, with one or two exceptions when some girl-chum was taken

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ruthlessly from me by removal from the neighborhood or city, I suffered much as these interests gradually gave place to others.

*I learn  
that a bird  
in the  
hand*

*Is not  
always  
better  
than two  
in the  
bush of  
prospect*

And so it has been all along, with my passions and my pleasures. Always I have thought that no kind of happiness could ever be possible for me except the present kind; and always, without jar or hurt, somehow, there has come another and better kind to supersede it. And thinking along this line, I fell into retrospection on the evolving of my ideal of love.

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I had a few "affairs of the heart" before I was ten, but they were very slight. I recollect that once I actually went to house-keeping with a boy, in a large empty packing-case in his back yard; but unless my memory plays me false, I was very much more in love with the packing-case than with the boy, and merely accepted him because he "came with it," so I don't count that a real love-affair. None of my fancies were very real, as I say, until I was ten. Then I loved a boy who sat next to me in the little private school I went to.

*The love  
of the  
packing-  
case*

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*A first  
"affair"*

He was a nice, quiet boy, several classes above me in "learning," and a little superior, I'm afraid, in his manner toward me. But that didn't matter; I adored him, humbly, and rather liked the quiet splendor of his superiority. I tried very hard to be worthy of him, because I meant to marry him when I was grown up—say at fourteen or sixteen. I recollect that in writing he always made the letter after p like this—ꝝ, whereas the copy-books and the teacher insisted that it should be made like this—ꝝ; but although

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I had always, previously, made both my p's and q's according to authority, I began, for love's sake, to make them the way the boy did, and I have made my q's thus ever since.

*p's and  
q's*

The boy was good enough to walk in the park with me, sometimes. The park was across the street from the little school, and we were sent thither at recess. I planned (secretly; I never told the boy) to buy the park when we were married (it is a very large park), and build a high stone wall all around it. We should live in a very

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*I plan an  
"estate"*

fine house in the exact middle of the park, and spend a great deal of our time riding in the "swan-boats" on the lake. On Sundays we would allow the public to file respectfully through our grounds, attended by our troop of mounted park police who would see that the said public deflected not from the narrow path of meekness and straightforwardness, and would, above all, exercise over said public a rigorous restraint from "touching anything." The boy and I would rise early in the morning, and ourselves attend

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to the ecstatic duty of feeding the wild animals in the Zoo; and with our own hands we would pick flowers by the bushel—just for the joy of rioting in what, now, we durst not touch. In every way would we enjoy complete freedom from all the restrictions of the present—and, oh! the joy of those swan-boats!

I entertained this particular dream of happiness for about two years, during which time it somehow became borne in upon me that the park was not for sale. I do not seem to have suffered in giving up

*The  
emanci-  
pation  
from  
“Don’t”*

*When  
genius  
died*

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this heavenly prospect, however. No, not even though, as I can now see, at that time genius died in me.

Andrew Lang says children are all geniuses until by education the practical is made to outweigh the imaginative and fancy is put in curb by probability. Somewhere between the age of ten and the age of twelve it dawned on me that *in all probability* I should never own the park. Then, I say, the genius in me died, but I cannot remember that it gave me any pain. I read a great deal in those days,

*Authors  
who  
pointed  
the way*

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chiefly the immortal works of Bertha M. Clay and May Agnes Fleming. I lived in an atmosphere of princes, duchesses, and noble lords, of "estates" and "town houses" and "Mediterranean villas," of "tiaras" and "the sheen of silks" and "the odor of rare exotics." Poor and lovely maidens never purchased public parks, I came to learn, though they frequently became duchesses and went to live on "broad, ancestral acres," in "stately, turreted halls."

I would be a duchess, I decided. There was a boy I

*To a new  
kind of  
vision*

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*One way  
to a  
coronet*

knew whose father was cousin to an English lord, and I decided that this boy (who was the youngest of three sons, and removed by about twenty lusty prior claimants from the lord's successorship) was he by whom I should rise. I believed (perhaps genius did not die in me all at one gasp) that this boy would, by a truly miraculous succession of casualties almost as sweeping as a second great flood, become a lord, presently, in his father's cousin's stead, and that I, ergo, would be—a duchess! No, I knew

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that to be a duchess one must have a duke for husband, but perhaps, I argued hopefully, there was a duke somewhere to whom this lord was heir; perhaps by more casualties still we might come to wear the famed strawberry-leaved coronet of my favorite heroines. But in any event, a lord was not so bad, and I pinned my faith sturdily to this imminent rise in the world.

My mind had begun to dwell on attire by that time—thanks, no doubt, to the detailed and unrestrained mil-

*But a  
remorse-  
less one*

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Gingham  
dreams of  
plush

linery descriptions of the Misses Clay and Fleming. I "thought out" the gowns I should wear in my new estate, and I remember that my regulation costumes were of white satin, thick white satin, embroidered in a blaze of gems, and further embellished by an enormously long "court train" of *plush!* Sometimes the train was to be of sapphire plush, and then the embroidery of the gown proper was of sapphires, and sometimes rubies or emeralds were used in similar harmonies of quiet taste and elegance. For

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really "swell" occasions the embroidery was done in diamonds, and the train was of white plush—always there was plush, a now unheard-of fabric, which then represented stupendous elegance at five dollars a yard.

*Embroidery of diamonds*

These dainty toilettes I wore, in my prospect, on all polite occasions. In the free and easy atmosphere of my own castle at breakfast-time, I wore a trailing (*all* my dream-gowns trailed yards!) confection of pale pink satin, with "billowy cascades" of lace. "Billowy cascades of lace" was a

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*The  
flaxen  
girl*

favorite term in my novels, and suffered not at all in my mind from the natural lack of harmony between billows and cascades.

But one day I walked to school with a girl—a lovely, pink-cheeked, blue-eyed, flaxen-haired, doll-featured girl, two years older than I—who got mad at me, sad, to relate, and by way of offensive (or was it defensive?) warfare, asked me how it felt to be as ugly as I was.

I had never thought much about my looks—nothing, in fact, except to regret that my

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hair was not yellow and my eyes blue; in my favorite novels all the lovely heroines had "hair like spun gold," and "eyes like purple violets," and the mean women who worked all the mischief were invariably brunette. I was sorry to be brunette, but I did not mean to let it divert me into a career of villainy. I aspired to be a heroine, and somehow, vaguely, trustingly, I had an undefined hope that perhaps my hair would turn gold some day, and my eyes grow violet-blue.

*All  
heroines  
are blonde*

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*I try to  
supple-  
ment  
nature*

## CHAPTER II

The thrust of the Flaxen Girl was almost mortal. After a miserable day at school, I hurried home and sat me down before my mirror for a minute recapitulation. The result came near being tragedy. I recollect that one item of the result was that in my zeal to overcome Fortune's niggardly treatment of me in the matter of beauty, I discarded mere soap in favor of one of the gritty scouring compounds for face-washing purposes, with consequences

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that were hard to bear till the skin grew on again. I invested in a famous complexion cream then, and raised a miraculously heavy crop of pimples; I went without the necessities of school-girl life to buy a tooth-powder that "no lady should be without," and I regularly "helped out" my eyebrows with the burnt end of a match. A girl told me that arsenic was good for the complexion, but somehow I mistrusted it; also the advice of another girl who said belladonna would "make your eyes bigger." If these sugges-

*With  
discour-  
aging  
results*

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*Losing  
faith in  
"beauti-  
fiers"*

tions had come to me earlier, I would in all probability have tried them, but by the time they were offered me my faith in the reconstructive powers of cosmetics had grown faint, and I had fallen back into a sort of happy notion that when I was bigger I should be better-looking, and that, anyway, fine feathers had a deal to do with helping on the appearance of a bird—or a duchess!

I cannot remember that I ever contemplated for more than a passing moment at most, any of the phases of

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being a duchess except the millinery phase. It was the phase in all my favorite literature which most interested and absorbed me. Not to tell what "she" had on, to the minutest detail, was to fall fatally short of the high calling of a real novelist; but all my novelists did tell, in each chapter, and so my mind was very clear as to the habits—or habiliments—of duchesses. All this time the duke was very hazy in my mind. He existed chiefly as a means to an end, although I always rather liked the idea of his

*The high  
calling  
of a nov-  
elist*

*The  
"duke"*

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being on hand to admire me (as of course he would!) in all my splendor. Poor little me! I'm afraid I hadn't got so very far away from the "packing-case" order of affection, even yet.

Before I was fifteen the last hope of being a duchess had faded from me; I could no longer wrestle with the improbability of it. But its going cost me no pang; it slipped from me, like my passion for swan-boats, while I was unaware; it was not ejected, but supplanted. I had "graduated" without an intermediary step,

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and without at all feeling the tremendous chasm bridged, from "Dora Thorne" to "Vanity Fair," from "Wee Wifie" to "Dombey and Son" and "David Copperfield," from "Tempest and Sunshine" to "Jane Eyre"; and, strangely enough, with the transition from most romantic trash to realistic fiction, it was either in that transition or coincident with it that some notion of romantic love first began to filter into my consciousness. Moreover, I began to see some experiences of it. The older sisters of girls I knew

*A change  
in au-  
thors*

*And a  
change  
in ideals*

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got engaged, and married. They were ecstatically happy; they had pretty new clothes (always the millinery factor!); they were married in a big church, to organ music, and preceded to the altar by trains of bridesmaids. Afterward they went to live in a lovely little house or flat with everything in it new and "bridey," and there they had cosey parties at which they exhibited all their fine possessions to admiring and envious friends. And by and by they had a baby. Oh, delight of delights—a baby! And they were very, very,

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very happy—of course! Who wouldn't be, with a new home and pretty "things," and a baby—and a husband?

I liked "the looks" of this kind of happiness. It was better than being a duchess in one important respect, at any rate. To be a duchess one had, presumably, to live in Europe, and there none of one's relatives and old-time friends would be by to look and envy. And who cares to dazzle mere strangers, if they are titled? Perhaps I had, too, by that time, a suspicion that happiness does not always

*Better  
than  
being a  
duchess*

*Happi-  
ness and  
the peer-  
age*

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go in direct ratio with ascending scales in the peerage. Perhaps, oh, well! I don't know what the reason may have been, but I relinquished my dream of marble halls and plush court-trains without a pang and came blissfully to a new ideal, based on a "nice," good young man, of undeniably brilliant prospects, of course; a church wedding, with a particularly voluminous veil; a pretty house, with a parlor equipped with gilt chairs; and a baby—ultimately, *several* babies! I had marked my man, too.

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Of course, the state of being grown up and married and possessed of gilt parlor chairs and tea-gowns with trains to 'em, and bonnets with strings, absorbed me more, even yet, than the man. It was still, in a way, of the packing-case order, but not altogether. There was only one boy who had a packing-case in his yard, and to become mistress of the packing-case one must accept, perforce, the boy who went with it. But though there were many young men of my acquaintance who were equally likely to provide gilt chairs

*I mark  
my man*

*From  
among  
several*

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and the necessary factor for a church wedding, there was only one I ever considered for the purpose.

I was nearly sixteen then, and looked forward to my wedding as not very far off. "He" was a tall, bronzed, athletic collegian—a rare scholar, a great favorite, a knightly soul. I thought we should be married immediately after his graduation; I was looking forward to my own graduation just about the same time, only mine was to be from the high school and his was to be from the professional

*And plan  
an early  
marriage*

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school of his college. He was very learned, and that he would be able to enter at once into a lucrative practice of his profession I did not for a moment doubt. I remember how I planned to make him happy; I had actually got as far as that! I remember that he liked chocolate cake, and that I resolved NEVER to let the supply of fresh, delicious chocolate cake run low in our house. I planned, too, to help him in his scholarly pursuits. I had bookish tastes, myself, and was noted in school for writing excellent "composi-

*Chocolate  
cake as a  
mark of  
progress*

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*My numerous family*

tions," so I had no doubt that we should enjoy a very companionable existence. Moreover, I planned to become a writer—a very, very celebrated and much-revered writer, of course, and our home would be a rallying-place for all the literary notabilities of the day.

I decided that we would have seven children, to be called, respectively, Philip, David, Helen, Beatrice, Jack, Elizabeth, and Lily. These little cherubs, I thought, would "play" all day with their "colored nurse," while I sat in the library, radiant in a pale-gray

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morning gown and a huge bunch of violets, and wrote great novels, stopping now and then to assist my husband in a particularly elegant phrase, or mayhap going occasionally to the kitchen to see if the supply of chocolate cake was up to standard.

The more I contemplated this well-planned future the more ecstatically certain I felt of its complete fulfilment. I almost swelled with pride when I foresaw how my husband's relatives would adore me, how I should be admired and worshipped by the community as

*A well-planned future*

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an "unspoiled" celebrity, and how, wherever I went, people would turn to look after me and say, "There she goes. Isn't she lovely?"

I meant to be very, very lovely—irreproachable in manner and in modes, in inner purity and outer complexion—in character and in costume complete. And, of course, my husband would be no less perfect. Being so perfect severally and so happy mutually, what in all the world could happen to vex us, to give us occasion for unlovely attributes? Yet I knew, in a vague way, even

*Enter, a  
shade of  
doubt*

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then, that people do not live and die without sorrow. I had read a really great deal of good literature, and fool of hope though I was, I knew that the world was full of sadness, and that it would be odd if I were marked for complete immunity. This misgiving took a firm hold on me, I remember, and *would not* be put aside. So, after thinking over *all* the calamities that could possibly befall "him and me," I came to the conclusion that one of our children would die. I hated the thought, for I was a maternal

*Which  
will not  
be put  
aside*

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*Facing  
the reck-  
oning*

little thing from my babyhood, and I loved my "dream children," even from afar off. But it seemed as if Sorrow came and sat down before me, and said, "I am inescapable; sooner or later you have got to reckon with me and pay the reckoning; everyone has to. Now, what shall it be?" And because I could not get the gaunt, gray creature out of my house of dreams, I made with her the best bargain that I could, I delayed my day of payment to the last moment I dared; I decided that when she was about five years old,

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*Lily* would die. This put the evil hour off for a number of years, and somehow, after I had made this compromise with my too optimistic self, I felt more certain than ever that all the rest would come true. So early do we clutch at the queer notion that, having paid tribute to Fate, having bent our necks in submissive recognition of her power, she should hold no further tyranny over us, but be a gracious conqueror.

*And  
parting  
with Lily*

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## CHAPTER III

When "he" graduated he went to Europe to study for two years, and our wedding was necessarily postponed—which was just as well, for my family would doubtless have considered me "ower young to marry yet," and he, poor man, had had no intimation of what was expected of him, at all.

*My wed-  
ding post-  
poned*

If he had stayed at home during those two years I might have found it difficult to maintain my house of

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dreams in the face of his complete ignorance of my intentions, his apparent indifference to my existence on the face of the earth. But he was so far away he was easy to "manipulate," and though I "grew up" very considerably in those two years, this dream had been so long with me, had entered so thoroughly into every root and fibre of my dream life, that it began to seem impossible that so complete, so stoutly woven a fabric should have no thread of fact in it. Almost, with my sober senses of eighteen years, I

*But the  
dream  
remains*

*Sober  
senses of  
eighteen*

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believed in this as my ultimate destiny.

I shall never forget my excitement when I knew he was coming home, my terrible anxiety about my dress for that season, so that he make no mistake about my "grown-upness" and fitness for matrimony and gilt chairs. I had a really long-trained dress for the first time in my life, trains being then in fashion for street wear; I had a hat which fairly *screamed* maturity at the passer-by. And I trembled with nervous ecstasy as I planned the delicious, the dramatic

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moment of our meeting and his recognition of the fact that I was *grown up*. Of course, he couldn't regard me seriously as a probable wife when he went away. He had two years to study before he could marry, and in any event, who could entertain any notion of matrimony in connection with a sixteen-year old miss, with skirts reaching only to her ankles? When he saw my *train*, I reflected, proudly, there would be no mistake!

Woe is me! how well I remember, as 'twere yester-night, the warm, sweet, starlit

Skirt-lengths  
and mat-  
rimony

"He" re-  
turns

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summer evening when I crept home in my trained gown and mature hat, and sat in a little, huddled heap on our porch, and would not, could not speak when spoken to by my mother. Poor, wee bit lassie! I was a stricken thing that night. I had received what seemed a mortal blow, nor could I tell just where the wound was. Only I knew that the foundations of my house of dreams were crumbling, and that nothing could save them, nor the superstructure. I was widowed and deprived of seven children, all

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in one stroke of calamity; indeed, so completely was my outlook swept clear of things to hope for, to live for, that though I laugh now at the plight of that night, it is through tears, for the memory of that feeling of awful, awful desolation, is with me still; I can feel, even yet, the rain of hot, hot tears that poured down my face, the utter, utter desolateness with which I sat in the midst of tender kindred and abundance of the good things of life, and wept over the ruin of my hopes, the grave of my girlish dreams.

*The fall  
of my  
house of  
dreams*

*Desola-  
tion.  
mid-  
abun-  
dance*

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*The  
angel  
with the  
flaming sword*

A pleasant look of recognition, a hearty hand-shake, a word of greeting—and absorption in the next comer! This was what broke away all the props of my dream-fabric. Another girl, perhaps, would not have given up so easily; another would have put by idle dreams for a while and tried to exercise active charms over the obdurate. I could not; I could only give up, and suffer, for the first time in my life, the angel with the flaming sword to take his stand before the barred gates of my Paradise.

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## CHAPTER IV

After this point I am afraid I cannot write a very coherent memory of the evolution of my girlish ideal. All the rest, up to date, is so fresh to me that I have no perspective on it, even though some of it dates back through a good many years.

*After  
many  
years*

I know that in the very early years of my evolving ideal I passed from one dream of happiness into another without waking, as 'twere—one dream just merging into another in an unbroken con-

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*While  
Sorrow  
respected  
me*

tinuity of blissful expectations. But what time I, even in my childish ignorance, looked up from my bright beads of fancy-weaving, and recognized Sorrow as a factor in human life, she claimed me for her subject on the strength of that recognition, and would thenceforth for no reason let me go. While I believed in the power of my desire to create its own fulfilment, Sorrow respected me as immune, divinely immune, but when I recognized her as an enemy to my dreams and tried to make compromise with her,

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then I lost my shield against her, and ever since I have grappled with her in conflict, trying to save this treasure, that hope, from her mercilessly exhaustive reckoning.

*Losing  
my shield*

But ever since I wrestled with her for the immunity of my household of seven children and all the accompaniments thereof, trying to hold her at bay for years by the offer of Lily as a sacrifice, and she exulted to show her victory over me by taking not Lily alone, but all the seven, and "him," and all that I had in my house of dreams, I

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*Sorrow takes*

*But pays  
good  
exchange*

have had to contest my right to every hope, every fancy, every aspiration; and as I recount, in memory, these contests, it seems to me as if I had almost never won, as if always I had given up, until one would think there must be nothing left for me to cherish, to hope; yet I am richer, immeasurably, to-day than ever in the day of my fullest dreams, for never has been wrested from me one dear anticipation, one loved ideal, but to me has come in its stead either a better joy or a richer sense of the joys remaining.

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### CHAPTER V

I cannot measure the successive steps of my ideal's evolution after the collapse of the dream last described—I can only measure what joy now means to me by what, one time, I thought it could only be.

I know that once I swore I would love only a big man, "a mighty man of valor," like Guy of Warwick, one strong to defend and sturdy to lean upon, and now I love only the weakest of men, the frailest, the neediest of care and devotion and love's patience. I

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*My Bene  
dick*

know that the knight of my childish dreams was attired like a combination of circus rider and Shakespearian Benedick, in pale-blue silk doublet and hose, and cloak of pale-blue velvet, with a blue-feathered cap on his golden curls and a deliciously clanking sword by his side—and that my knight to-day is not even “well-groomed,” just a most wraith-like, stooping figure, in the most ill-fitting of baggy clothes; sartorially, he might almost be taken at some distance for one of the gaunt things farmers erect to scare crows.

*Wears  
baggy  
clothes*

## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

Later, when my mind had got away from the physical and on to the mental and spiritual equipment of my ideal, I remember that I stipulated with myself that "he" should be of a joy-loving temperament, kin to mine—and lo! he is a son of the Puritans, mistrusting gladness, always, as ominous; and fearful of happiness lest it stand for the absence of sensitiveness, the arrest of development. I hoped that he would be a gallant man, a cavalier, if not a chevalier; I had a beautiful theory that Love was,

## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

*Alas, my  
poor  
"knight"!*

*Twang  
ing  
heart-  
chords*

very properly, dependent on the sweet and gracious little expressions which, all told, go to make up chivalry. Alas, my poor "knight"! He has a fatality for doing the wrong thing. Instead of making my heart flutter hourly with some exquisite courtesy, he twangs the poor, taut chords thereof, hourly, in sharp discord, and hourly I have to summon all my love to forgive him. I used to dream that my knight would bring me flowers—violets, and now and then a great red rose or a handful of hyacinths—but he has never given

## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

me so much as a pansy "for thoughts," or a four-leaved clover to put between the pages of my book "for luck." I used to hope that he would come for me in a fine coach, with prancing, dashing horses, and take me to festivities, all in a flutter of excitement, but when he comes he gets wearily off a jangling cable car, and instead of whisking me off to ball or theatre, he puts his head down on my shoulder and says, "I am *so tired*." I used to think in all my moments of anguish, that some day I should have

"*So tired*"

## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

a broad bosom to creep to and there weep out all my heart's bitterness, but it is never so with me; if I am sad, he is always sadder and must needs be comforted.

*Taking account of sacrifice*

As I have given up one cherished hope after another, with regard to my ideal, I have tried to ask myself each time, since consciousness came upon me with that first surrender to Sorrow, whether this sacrifice were not the last sustaining prop of my house of dreams, whether I was not a fool of fools to try longer to dwell in so tottering a fabric.

## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

Face to face have I wrestled with the conviction that at some certain point sacrifice becomes mere weakness to resist rather than strength to overcome, and strenuously have I striven with myself that I feed not the flame on my altar of love with some sacrifice that instead of replenishing my fire would quench it. I know that one can pay too dear for anything, even for love, and I have tried not to let myself be willing to pay the price that maketh poor and impoverisheth. I know, too, that love of the highest

*The price  
that im-  
pover-  
isheth*

## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

*What  
things  
are worth  
while*

type must demand as well as give—must demand, oftentimes, where it would be far, far easier to give—and I have tried to be steadfast to certain lines of insistence, have tried not to falter in holding my ideals always high and higher, and not to forget them or make compromise with their enemies, even though, for love's sake, I had hourly to overlook some insufficient fulfilment of them, some violence to their tenets. I have held to the belief that some things are "worth while" from the great, ultimate point of view

## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

and others are not, and I have tried, as best I could see, and weigh, and judge, to choose—God knows!—the things that *are*.

I have weighed in one balance, my knight, your frail health, and in the other balance I have tried to put what I know of my own patience and tenderness and physical sufficiency; I have tried to balance all your shortcomings of my ideal with all my powers to overlook and bear them; I have tried to scrutinize myself, to know if I seem to be the woman who can do

*Weighed  
in the  
balance*

## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

*"So  
praying"*

most *for* you, be most *to* you, ay, and I have tried to see if the points of disparity between us be such as, in their compromise or adjustment, shall be good for you and me, individually and jointly, or such as in all wisdom should warn us apart. And so trying, so praying, in *utter* desire to know the right for us both, and to do it, I have dumped into one balance *all* the things wherein love as you bring it to me differs from love as I yearned after it, and into the other balance I have put all that you are

## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

to me that I cannot analyze, or describe, or dispense with! And it has far, far outweighed all the rest.

And my house of dreams to-day? It hasn't a detail, in my mind, of location, or size, or trappings, so only you are in it! And Sorrow is in it, I know; not "after many years," either, but from the first, even as a household saint. And if there is a parlor it shall be furnished with Forbearance, for there we shall see the "polite" world, which, whether one be glad or sad, is so alien that if it be accepted at all it can

*A new  
house of  
dreams*

## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

*"Furnished  
with  
Cheer"*

only be with forbearance. And the dining-room shall be furnished with Cheer, for there we shall gather, now and then, the chosen few we really love, and set before them our best refreshment of body and spirit, that they may fare forward the stronger therefor. And if there is a little "den," it shall be "done" in Congeniality, for it will be mine and yours, your pipes and my embroidery lying down together in peace and harmony, like the lion and the lamb in the Apocalypse. And there shall be a large, upper chamber, with "windows

## The Evolution of a Girl's Ideal

opening toward Jerusalem," and it shall be made beautiful with Love, for there, when all things and all men shall have tried us, and we are sore beset and weary, we shall come together—all the world outside—and whether our hearts be sad or lightsome, whether the world vex us or we vex one another, we shall stand face to face, in the quiet, in the quiet, and look into each other's eyes, and laugh, and sob, and say, "Yet Love remaineth! Yet Love remaineth!"

Even so, my house of dreams!

*"Made  
beautiful  
with  
Love"*

*"Yet  
Love re-  
main-  
eth!"*













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